

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

APPEAL AGAINST REFUSAL FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

APPLICATION REF. NOS:	25/01115/FUL & 25/01106/ADV
APPEAL REF. NOS	6002902 & 6002903
LOCATION:	Footpath outside 214 Northgate, Darlington
DESCRIPTION:	Installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
APPLICANT:	BT Group PLC

PLANNING OFFICER: ANDREW HARKER

BRIEF SUMMARY:

1. Advertisement consent and planning permission were both refused for the installation of a BT Street Hub Unit with advertisement panels on either side. The Hub was located within the pavement outside No 214 Northgate, Darlington

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

2. The Hub would be located within the Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area.

REASON(S) FOR REFUSAL:

3. Planning application reference number 25/01115/FUL was refused on the grounds that the Hub would have an adverse impact on the character of the local environment and street scene and would not positively respond to local context in terms of its scale, siting and appearance. The freestanding Hub would be visually intrusive and form an incongruous and alien feature within the street scene, resulting in a prominent and overbearing structure which is out of character with its surroundings. Furthermore, the Hub would harm the significance of the Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area by virtue of its siting, scale and appearance.
4. Advertisement consent reference number 25/01106/ADV was refused as the proposed display panels, when viewed individually and in conjunction with existing advertising panels in existing nearby bus shelters, are considered to be an incongruous form of advertising, also leading to a proliferation and clutter of advertising displays which would harm the general character and amenity of the streetscape by virtue of their scale, appearance and siting. Furthermore, the proposed display panels, when viewed individually and in conjunction with existing advertising panels in existing nearby bus shelters, would lead to an unsympathetic

proliferation and clutter of advertising displays which would harm the historic character and appearance of the Northgate Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area, by virtue of their scale, appearance and siting.

APPEALS ALLOWED:

5. In the decision, the Planning Inspector noted that Northgate is a busy A road, and the area is predominately in a commercial area with a variety of street furniture nearby. The Inspector considered that significance of the Conservation Area which is largely derived from the still-visible Georgian and Victorian streetscape in the Northgate area, surviving buildings from those periods which serve to illustrate Darlington's change and growth as an industrial town, and the physical and historical connections to the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first public railway in the world to use a steam locomotive to haul passengers.
6. It was considered that the proposed hub unit itself would have a slim profile which would moderate its visual impact; combined with the modern design and dark finish it would not in itself be an unduly prominent or intrusive feature in the streetscape.
7. The proposal would introduce additional illuminated displays to the area, but they would be alongside a busy main road on an urban high street which, while obviously secondary compared to the town centre in terms of its retail role, nevertheless retains a commercial character. In this context, two digital screens carrying advertisements would not be an unexpected or otherwise incongruous element. The fact that there are already similar displays on the nearby bus shelter was noted but the Planning Inspector considered that there would not be such a concentration of advertisements within this stretch of Northgate to lead to a harmful cumulative impact.
8. The Planning Inspector was satisfied that the installation would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance, or visual amenity, of the area; and the character of the Conservation Area would be preserved.
9. Both appeals have been allowed subject to planning conditions set out in the appeal decision.